

10-1991

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Recommended Citation

Hale, Douglas (1991) "Life and Death among the Lone Star Defenders: Cherokee County Boys in the Civil War," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 29: Iss. 2, Article 7.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol29/iss2/7>

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LIFE AND DEATH AMONG THE LONE STAR DEFENDERS: CHEROKEE COUNTY BOYS IN THE CIVIL WAR

by Douglas Hale

The Civil War is too remote for most of us to comprehend, though hundreds of thousands of Americans are still fascinated by this central event in our national experience. New information about the great struggle becomes available every year. Civil War books by the carload attract legions of armchair campaigners, while more energetic armies of reenactors sweat and suffer in their determination to recapture the brutal essence of Shiloh, Gettysburg, or Chickamauga. Yet in spite of the thousands of books — notwithstanding the proliferation of images through photographs, motion pictures, and television — it becomes ever more difficult for us to imagine what life and death were like in the middle of the nineteenth century. The last of the old soldiers have been gone for more than a generation. The supersonic pace of technology, the torrest of social change, and the cacophonous din of our global culture separate us ever more widely from that remote time in which the internecine violence played itself out. A prodigious leap of the imagination is necessary to propel ourselves backward into the setting of the Civil War and perceive it as it actually occurred.

My own efforts to grasp the reality of the war have led me to concentrate upon a limited number of participants in the conflict, focus my attention upon the localized landscape from which they sprang, and attempt to reconstruct their lives. A Confederate company consisted of little more than a hundred men, and most of these original volunteer units were raised within the same locality. Typically, a single county provided almost all the recruits in a company: the men were literally brothers, cousins, and neighbors to each other. By so delimiting my investigation to an individual company of men, it is possible to come to know them all — from captains to privates — and more important, perhaps, to become familiar with the rural Southern environment that produced them. Seen against the larger background of the war, the lives of these men may teach us lessons, and we may arrive at insights that have eluded us before.

For these reasons, therefore, I have chosen to study the lives and military experiences of the soldiers in Company C of the Third Texas Cavalry, a unit raised in Cherokee County, and sketch their composite portrait. This essay attempts to identify these men according to their social, economic, and political status and explain their regional and occupational backgrounds. Moreover, it is my purpose to trace briefly the involvement of this unit in battle throughout the war, describe the impact of death through combat or disease, and assess the incidence of attrition caused by wounds, desertion, or disability. Finally, I cannot refrain from cautious

speculation concerning the impact of wartime experience on the lives of the veterans.

Seven types of sources make this study possible. The first consists of unpublished journals and letters written during the war.¹ Published memoirs have also proven useful. Though most of the men of Company C were reticent or negligent in recording their impressions and perceptions of battle, Cherokee County is fortunate in that one of the most accurate and detailed eye-witness accounts by a Confederate soldier, Sam Barron's *Lone Star Defenders*, was written and published by a member of Company C.² The third category of source material is derived from the copious official military records themselves, notably *The War of the Rebellion*.³ In addition, the surviving service records of the men in the ranks have been used extensively.⁴ In order to explain who these young volunteers of 1861 were and where they came from, I have relied upon the biographical material available in the population schedules of the Census of 1860.⁵ Valuable insights into the postwar circumstances of the men in the company may be obtained from the veterans' pension records at Austin.⁶ Finally, several recently published collections of local biography and history filled out the picture.⁷

Company C had its inception in the wave of patriotic enthusiasm that swept across the South in the wake of the fall of Fort Sumter in April 1861. The Texas governor immediately issued a call for 8000 volunteers for the Confederate Army and appointed a number of distinguished citizens to recruit and train troops throughout the state. Among those so charged was Brigadier General Joseph L. Hogg, a veteran of the Mexican War, delegate to the Secession Convention of the previous January, and the most prominent political leader in Cherokee County. Hogg had little difficulty in recruiting the requisite men, for Cherokeans were in a defiant and bellicose mood. In the referendum of the previous February, county voters had opted by a majority of 1106 to thirty-eight for secession from the Union. By May 1, Hogg had enlisted a hundred men who styled themselves "The Lone Star Defenders." Some of the recruits dropped out prior to mobilization, but sixty-two of their number remained in the unit to form the nucleus of Company C.⁸

Like other Confederate volunteer companies, the Lone Star Defenders elected their own officers. The men chose Francis M. Taylor, the thirty-three-year-old district clerk, as their captain. He owned seven slaves and \$4300 worth of land; he was the son of a former speaker of the state House of Representatives; and he showed himself to be a forceful commander. When, for example, Private George Buxton, a chronic drunk and inveterate brawler, involved himself in an altercation with civilians, Taylor subdued him by pinning him down on a manure pile while his sergeant applied copious bucketfuls of cold well water to Buxton's prostrate form.

Taylor came from the little community of Larissa, the home of a Presbyterian college, which, with an enrollment of 125 students, provided

an oasis of genteel cultivation amid the pine-clad hills rising steeply above the Neches River bottom. Stirred by Taylor's example, fifteen former students of the college joined the company. Other young men of some prominence in the county were chosen to fill the slate of officers. First Lieutenant James Barker, a lawyer at Rusk, was courting General Hogg's daughter when he enlisted. Second Lieutenant Frank Daniel was the son of a state legislator, and Third Lieutenant James A. Jones served as justice of the peace.⁹

As the young volunteers practiced their cavalry drills at Rusk, word arrived that Colonel Elkanah B. Greer of Marshall was raising a regiment for the Confederate Army, and the Cherokeans rushed off to Dallas, then "a pretty little town near the Trinity River," to rendezvous with nine other East Texas companies which were to form Greer's command.¹⁰ On June 10, 1861, Taylor's recruits received a rousing send-off from the 500 people who made up the population of Rusk. General Hogg delivered a stirring speech, and with farewells and good wishes ringing in their ears, the Lone Star Defenders hurriedly set out for Dallas in a mood of "merriment and good cheer."¹¹

Upon arrival, the Cherokee County unit took the designation of Company C, Third Texas Cavalry Regiment, added a few latecomers to its roster, and found a bivouac in a grove of oaks a few miles east of town. Drawing their water from the well of a local butcher and converting a nearby farmhouse into a makeshift infirmary, the young recruits began to adapt themselves to the unfamiliar routine of army life, basking all the while in the unrestrained hospitality of the enthusiastic Dallasites.¹² The local belles were particularly delighted by the descent of a thousand young cavaliers into their midst, and the Cherokeans were equally impressed by the pulchritude of these "Prairie Girls." A young private confessed to his sister that in Dallas he found "some of the best-favored girls, nearly, I ever saw."¹³

Of the 114 volunteers who rode to Dallas in Captain Taylor's command, Cherokee County provided more than four-fifths; the few remaining came from neighboring counties. For the most part, they were just the right age to be soldiers: the median age of privates in the company (twenty-three) matched closely that of other Confederate units from Texas. There were, however, three sixteen-year-old boys among them, all students: William Herndon lived on a Pine Town plantation that employed thirty-eight slaves; William Newton was the son of a Larissa slaveholder; and Rufus Smith's father was one of the founders of the village of Knoxville. William Hood, a fifty-one-year-old, English-born mechanic, took the honors for seniority, but he did not last long; Hood was discharged as unfit for service within a few months. All but seven of Taylor's men had been born in Southern or Border states. The largest proportion, thirty-four percent, hailed from Alabama, while Tennessee followed close behind with twenty-one percent. Besides Hood, there were only two others in the

unit who had been born abroad: John Hanson, a Danish shoemaker; and John F. Dunn, from Ireland. Both later deserted the company after two years' service. Only eighteen original members of Company C were heads of families.¹⁴

The social and economic status of the volunteers point to the fact that Cherokee County occupied a middling range of affluence between the extensive and prosperous plantation agriculture of some of its neighbors to the east and the poor subsistence farming practiced in the prairie counties lying to the north and west. In terms of per capita wealth, the white people of Cherokee County owned about 1.6 times as much property as those of Hunt County, which lay in the still largely undeveloped Blackland Prairie region, but less than a third as much as the inhabitants of Harrison County, on the Louisiana border. In 1859, Harrison County produced 21,440 bales of cotton, Cherokee 6,251, and Hunt only twenty-two. Cherokee County was neither rich nor poor; it was about average.¹⁵

The county was new country. Almost all its inhabitants had been on the land but fifteen years when the Civil War began. The rude cabins of the frontiersmen were only gradually giving way to the more comfortable clapboard dwellings of farmers and planters, as the great cotton boom of the 1850s made possible the accumulation of fortunes in land and slaves. Though making for an agreeable and scenic landscape, the red hills of Cherokee County were not ideally suited for extensive cultivation. The railroad had not yet penetrated the county's boundaries, and its streams were too shallow to permit riverboat transportation. Beyond an occasional blacksmith shop, gristmill, sawmill, or gin, no manufacturing existed.¹⁶

In terms of economic status, then, the Lone Star Defenders represented an average slice of East Texas society. In those days, wealth was measured on a smaller scale than by today's standards. There was but a single millionaire in the whole state in 1860, and only 263 Texas citizens owned more than \$100,000 worth of property. Land in Cherokee County sold for an average of \$2.79 per acre, and \$20 was a good monthly wage for a farmhand. By these standards, a person with \$20,000 to his name was well off indeed. In fact, the average white Texas household owned but \$6393 worth of property.¹⁷

Young Reuben Thompson's family owned more property — \$54,840 — than any other represented in the company, but he came from wealthy Harrison County. Seven Cherokee County recruits belonged to households possessing estates worth at least \$30,000; eight others came from families which listed no property at all in the Census of 1860. Most of the men sprang from yeoman farmer stock, which had moderate holdings in land or slaves. While the four original officers of Company C lived in households which held an average of \$11,100 in property, the mean household wealth of the 110 enlisted men was \$7935, about one and a quarter times the state average.¹⁸

Since land in frontier Texas was cheap, the chief measure of wealth was slaves. There were 3246 black bondsmen in Cherokee County in 1860, or twenty-seven percent of the total population of 12,098. They could be sold for an average of about \$765 each, and thus constituted over half the total property in the county when the war began. Relatively few white Texans possessed slaves: only twenty-nine percent of all households did so. However, since half the boys in Company C came from households employing slave labor, they probably had a greater than ordinary interest in the future of slavery and the security of their property. Yet most of these soldiers represented families that owned but a few slaves each: the median number of slaves per household was seven.¹⁹

Most of the boys in Taylor's company were still too young to have accumulated much property or achieved any prominence themselves, but a number of them came from well-to-do families. Of those recruits who had been engaged in agriculture, about one-fifth came from the planter class, some three-quarters from yeoman farm families, and only seven percent from poor households owning less than \$250 in property. While three-quarters of all white East Texans made their living from agriculture, the backgrounds of the Lone Star Defenders suggest a more diversified group. Little more than half of those recruits who listed their occupations in the census were engaged directly in farming. About thirty percent were either students or professional men, including six lawyers and three physicians. Dr. James M. Brittain, for example, practiced medicine at Griffin, while Drs. Washington L. Gammage and William W. McDugald served the people of Rusk.²⁰

That the company attracted a number of young men of promise is attested by the fact that besides Taylor and Daniel, numerous other scions of prominent families enrolled in its ranks. Private Thomas Jackson was himself a former state legislator and mayor of Rusk, and Corporal Thomas Woodall served as county commissioner. John B. Reagan, the eighteen-year-old nephew of the Confederate postmaster general, enlisted as a private, as did Tom Hogg, the eldest son of the general. County officials seemed to vie with each other in dispatching sons to battle for the cause: Corporal Pomeroy Coupland was the son of a county judge, and County Commissioners Hosea Jones, John W. Phillips, and William Roark sent sons to the service as well. Private John W. Smith's father founded Jacksonville, while that of Felix Hardgraves erected the town's first school. Private William Moseley's father built the first courthouse in Rusk.²¹

Though there were a few brawlers, misfits, and malingerers among their number, the Lone Star Defenders were as a rule the best and the brightest youths Cherokee County could muster, and their respective sires were anxious that the young men acquit themselves with honor, courage, and devotion to duty in the face of the dangers awaiting them. Sheriff William T. Long, for instance, admonished his son by letter against the
chance of desertion:

John, I want you to go as far as the company goes & not to return till the company returns unless sickness causes you to have to return. Graham [, absent without leave,] is here John, & Everyone is hissing him everywhere he goes. I would rather never see you again than for you to come off as he has.²²

Sheriff Long need not have worried: his son, like most of his comrades, would prove himself a tough and resourceful soldier during four years of hazard and hardship.

After tarrying almost a month in Dallas awaiting the delivery of supplies, their regiment struck out to the north on July 9, 1861. The Cherokeans forded the Red River and trekked across Indian Territory to join Brigadier General Ben McCulloch's Confederate army at Fort Smith, Arkansas. McCulloch was then awaiting a propitious moment to drive a Union force commanded by Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon out of Missouri. After considerable hesitation, the Rebels engaged the enemy on August 10 at Wilson's Creek, near Springfield. Though the battle produced a Confederate victory, McCulloch's losses were heavy.²³

The Cherokee County company emerged from its first encounter relatively intact, however, with but one man killed and three wounded. Private Leander Cole, a twenty-two-year-old Larissa farmer, paid for his audacity on the battlefield with a mortal wound from a Yankee rifle, and thus became the first Cherokeean to die in battle in the Civil War. James E. Dillard, a lawyer-turned-private, received a disabling wound in the leg; Judge Coupland's son, Pomeroy, suffered a slight head injury; and T. Wiley Roberts incurred a flesh wound in the neck which so unnerved him that he avoided combat for the rest of the war.²⁴

A further fourteen members of Company C were dropped from the rolls shortly after the battle. Some were promoted out of the unit. Captain Taylor's younger brother, James, was transferred as a captain to the Seventeenth Texas Cavalry, and Private Woodson Wade, a former student at Larissa, went with him. Orlando Doty got his own company command in the Twenty-Eighth Texas Cavalry, and Private James Park became a company commander in a Georgia regiment. Dr. Gammage was assigned as regimental surgeon to an Arkansas unit, while Dr. Brittain was sent home to care for the sick in Cherokee County. Seven others were discharged honorably as physically unfit for hard campaigning. Captain Taylor simply left the chronic misfit, Private James Gum, behind at his home in Missouri, glad to be rid of him, while Hiram Donaho, who was too sick to fight, remained in Texas, where he soon died.²⁵

Hardly had the troops undergone their baptism of fire at Wilson's Creek than they were beset by an epidemic of typhoid, measles, and dysentery that struck McCulloch's army as it moved from one encampment to another in southwest Missouri. Most of the young soldiers had led relatively isolated lives among the sparsely populated hills and valleys of the South. Abruptly thrown together in unhygienic camps, they were

exposed to infections for which they had never developed an immunity, and scores of McCulloch's men sickened and died. While Company C escaped the most severe ravages of disease, five of the Cherokee County boys died that autumn. The most conspicuous loss was Captain Taylor himself, who succumbed to typhoid at Fayetteville, Arkansas, on November 12. Lieutenant Jones took over command of the company.²⁶

With the coming of cold weather in December, the Rebel troopers repaired to Winter quarters near Van Buren, Arkansas. They had just settled in, when they were ordered out to chase a band of Creek Indians who had sided with the Union across the snowy hills and prairies of what is today eastern Oklahoma. At Chustenahlah, just north of present-day Tulsa, Company C formed part of a contingent that fought a pitched battle with the Indians on December 26. The Cherokee Countians joined their comrades in charging up a rocky hillside into the camp of the enemy and routed them all the way to Kansas without losing a man.²⁷

Back in winter quarters, the troopers enjoyed a reasonably comfortable respite until their new commander, Major General Earl Van Dorn, ordered them out again late in February 1862. This time their officers led them through the frigid passes of the Ozarks to confront a Federal army under Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis at Pea Ridge, in northwestern Arkansas. The battle, which consumed most of March 6 and 7, turned into a Confederate disaster. But owing to pure chance, the boys in Company C were left to watch the carnage as spectators from the sidelines. Jones lost but three men wounded: Privates Joe Welch; William Phillips; and Alfred Summers. All three later rejoined the company.²⁸

Meanwhile, the focus of the war shifted to southern Tennessee, where Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant advanced against a Rebel strongpoint at Corinth, Mississippi. Van Dorn ordered the Texans' horses sent back home, while he shipped his men from Arkansas to Mississippi by riverboat and railroad in April 1862. In the crowded Confederate encampment at Corinth, many hundreds more died of disease that spring. Three privates from Company C — John Baker, James Cooper, and John Stovall — succumbed to illnesses contracted in the pestilential camps. The most notable Cherokee County victim, however, was General Hogg himself, who had come to Corinth to take over a brigade.²⁹ When the Rebels evacuated the town ahead of the Union advance on May 29, Company C served as part of their rear guard. This entailed the loss of three Cherokeans killed: James Barker, who had been promoted to major; Sergeant Wallace Caldwell, of Rusk; and Corporal Pomeroy Coupland. Private John Lambert was disabled by a wound.³⁰

While the attrition of battle and disease diminished the number of Lone Star Defenders but gradually, a law passed by the Confederate Congress in April 1862, administered a sudden and costly blow to the strength of the company. This Conscription Act required a reorganization of the

While the law imposed a draft on most adult white

males throughout the South, it also had the effect of deferring certain categories of men, including those younger than eighteen and older than thirty-five, from further service. As a result, twenty-six soldiers from Company C — a fourth of its original complement — were discharged as too old, too young, or disabled.

For example, the Acker brothers, Christopher and Peter, forty and thirty-eight years old respectively, returned home. Forty-year-old Charles Pierce rejoined his family in the Seven Leagues community of Smith County, and Private William Hammett, age forty-three, returned to his place at Antioch. Some of the younger men who were discharged reenlisted in other Confederate units. Tom Hogg joined the Arizona Brigade of Texas Volunteers; James A. Barnett enlisted in the First Texas Partisan Rangers; Rufus Smith later enrolled in the Eleventh Texas Infantry. Other discharged soldiers became part of the flotsam of war and never came home at all. Ex-Sergeant Howell Harris, for instance, loitered around Company C's camp until Private Edward Wallace of Pine Town shot him dead as a suspected thief.³¹

Reorganization also entailed a new election of officers and non-commissioned officers, and the entire company command changed hands. James A. Jones was confirmed as captain, but all twelve original lieutenants, sergeants, and corporals were replaced by generally younger and presumably hardier men. The mean age of the original company cadre had been twenty-nine years; that of the new was only twenty-four. In the meantime, new recruits trickled into the ranks. Even before the company left Arkansas, a dozen boys had hurried up from East Texas to join their kinfolks in the ranks before they missed out on the war entirely. William J. Bass, for example, had a brother already serving in the unit, as did Joel Halbert and John Wesley Wade. The Keahey brothers, Sam and William, also joined up in Arkansas. But already the pool of available manpower at home was drying up, and the number of new recruits fell far short of replacing the three-score troops already dead, discharged, or incapacitated by wounds or illness.

Their most lethal single day of the war, September 19, 1862, still loomed before them. In the Battle of Iuka, Mississippi, Lieutenant General Sterling Price sent his Texas troops in frontal assault against masked Federal cannon, with predictable consequences. The Cherokee County company lost four dead: Privates William Bowers; Carter Caldwell; William Crawley; and William T. Harris. John Felps was wounded severely. Less than a month later, General Van Dorn ordered his army, of which Company C was still a part, to charge the Union fortifications around Corinth. The resulting casualties were appalling, but once again good fortune kept the Cherokeans out of the midst of the battle. They did not come away unscathed, however; Captain Jones was mortally wounded. Lieutenant John Germany, a thirty-two-year-old clerk from New Salem, Rusk County, was promoted to take his place as commanding

officer. Sergeant William McCain and Private Edward S. Wallace also incurred wounds, but not so severe that they could not return to duty. Privates LaFayette Gresham and John Long were captured, but Long escaped and Gresham subsequently was paroled.³²

Late in the fall of 1862, the boys from Cherokee County got their horses back and became cavalymen again after seven months of marching through Mississippi as footsoldiers. That December their regiment joined a column of 3500 raiders whom Van Dorn led in a lightening assault against Grant's supply depot at Holly Springs, Mississippi. They captured millions of dollars' worth of Union stores and burned many millions more. Some of the boys made themselves unroariously drunk on the liberated Yankee liquor supply, and Private William Pennington, a former bricklayer from New Salem, found \$20,000 in greenbacks which he proceeded to hawk around in exchange for \$5 in silver. The Holly Springs Raid was a memorable exploit. Before Company C returned to its base near Grenada, Mississippi, however, it lost Private Alva Box, who fell on Christmas Eve in a futile attack on a Federal strongpoint at Middleburg, Tennessee.³³

Since the Confederate army of General Braxton Bragg now appeared threatened by a Union advance south from Nashville, the Lone Star Defenders were ordered with their regiment to the Tennessee front in January 1863. They fought their biggest battle in that quarter at Thompson's Station the following March. Private Beecher Donald, a Denton County boy who had been attending school at Larissa before the war, was killed. Privates David Allen and Benjamin Long were wounded but recovered sufficiently to return to duty. Also injured, Corporal A.G. Carmichael wound up in a Yankee prison.³⁴

In May 1863, Company C's regiment was recalled to Mississippi to help General Joseph E. Johnston in his vain effort to thwart Grant's massive offensive against the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg. Determined to starve the Rebels out, Grant drew a cordon of 71,000 Yankees around the Confederate earthworks to the east of the city, while his gunboats shelled the fortress from the river below. The Lone Star Defenders harassed the attackers from the rear, ambushed Federal foragers, and dashed up and down the bluffs between Yazoo City and Vicksburg in pursuit of Yankee raiding parties. But the Rebel bastion fell to the enemy on July 4, and the state capital of Jackson surrendered two weeks later.³⁵

For the next nine months during the Fall and Winter of 1863, the Cherokeans bivouacked on the bluffs and in the river bottoms between Vicksburg and Jackson and fought frequent skirmishes in an effort to hold the line in western Mississippi. Their regiment was assigned to Brigadier General Lawrence S. "Sul" Ross's Texas Brigade, and the men renewed their endurance and resolve under his leadership. Ross's men participated in a pitched battle against black troops near Yazoo City and earned a reputation for ruthless ferocity toward the former slaves. The Lone Star defenders smuggled arms across the Mississippi River during the Winter

and raided Union supply points on the Vicksburg front. The following Spring, they joined in a foray to northern Alabama in pursuit of Union sympathizers among the natives. Their only casualty in this operation was self-inflicted: Private Luther Grimes fell into an argument with his fellow Cherokeean, James Ivy, and shot him dead.³⁶

In May 1864, the Confederate command summoned the Texans to north Georgia to assist in the defense of Atlanta, now under attack by Major General William T. Sherman. At that time there were still forty-six officers and men on the roster of Company C, but twenty-four of them were absent on special duty, ill in hospitals, held as prisoners, or had failed to keep up with their unit. Their absentee rate of forty-three percent was typical of that which prevailed in the Confederate Army as a whole. It would constitute a crucial factor in the military defeat of the South.³⁷

For 112 days during the Summer of 1864 the men from Cherokee County found no respite from combat on the Atlanta front, but their casualties were light. Company C lost but one man killed: William Kellam, a private from Rusk County, fell on the first day he came under fire. Four others were wounded, including Captain Germany, who was rendered unfit for service for several months. Sergeant Cicero Smith and Corporal William T. Phillips were captured and confined to the Federal prison at Camp Douglas, Illinois. Smith died there of remittent fever; Phillips survived. After a campaign that lasted half a year, the coveted prize of Atlanta fell to Sherman's triumphant forces on September 1.³⁸

Two months later, Company C joined Lieutenant General John B. Hood's march into Tennessee in a desperate gamble to carry the war into the North again. The East Texans saw action at Spring Hill and Franklin in November 1864, but fortunately escaped the bloody debacle at Nashville the following month, since they had ridden off under the command of Lieutenant General Nathan B. Forrest on a raid against the Yankee fortress at Murfreesboro. The Lone Star Defenders then served as part of Hood's rear guard in the retreat of his shattered army out of Tennessee, losing but two men wounded and one captured in the process.³⁹ Though Hood's main army was demoralized in defeat, the rear guard remained "undaunted and firm and did its work bravely to the last."⁴⁰

For most of the Spring of 1865, as the Union consolidated its victory, the troopers from Cherokee County remained relatively inactive on picket duty near their base at Canton, Mississippi. About half of the soldiers in their regiment were given long-overdue furloughs in February, and these men made their way across the flooded Mississippi Valley to return to East Texas even as the war was grinding toward a close. Still others departed for home without benefit of leave. In all, nine of the Cherokeans deserted during the course of the war. By its end, absenteeism ran to about sixty percent of those Confederate soldiers still on the rolls, and Company C was no exception to this rule. As part of Lieutenant General Richard Taylor's command, a remnant of the Cherokee County unit

surrendered on May 4, 1865, at Citronelle, Alabama. Of the 135 men who had served in the company, only thirty-two were left in the field to surrender.⁴¹

In a war that had taken a quarter million Confederate lives, the casualties inflicted upon the boys of Company C were surprisingly light, however. Excluding sixteen men on the company rolls whose fate cannot be determined, there were 119 soldiers who have been accounted for throughout the war. Eighty-eight of them, or almost three-quarters, survived. Fourteen Lone Star Defenders were killed in battle, sixteen died from the effects of disease, and one was killed by a comrade. Their rate of battle deaths (twelve percent) compared favorably, for example, with the sixteen percent of the First Texas Infantry Regiment, Hood's Brigade, who were killed in action. But the proportion of men in Company C who are known to have died from disease (thirteen percent) was slightly higher than the twelve percent of the First Texas. In addition to those killed in action, twenty-one of the Cherokeans were wounded at least once, and eleven were captured by the enemy.⁴²

The relatively moderate casualties incurred by the Cherokeans may be attributed primarily to fortuitous circumstances. Owing to chronic confusion in the Confederate command, Company C was left on the sidelines during three of the bloodiest encounters of the war in the West: the Battle of Pea Ridge (March 6-7, 1862); the Battle of Corinth the following October; and the Battle of Nashville (December 15-16, 1864). Moreover, as cavalymen, the East Texans generally pursued mobile and wide-ranging tactics and were thus less frequently subjected to suicidal infantry charges, such as those General Hood mounted during the latter phase of the Atlanta Campaign. The gradual attrition of the unit was more a consequence of the inefficacy of Confederate military policy than either Yankee bullets or the ravages of disease.

In summary, these first volunteers from Cherokee County represented for the most part the substantial agrarian class of their region, with a higher than average incidence of slave ownership and political influence among their families. Like Texans in general, they embarked upon their great crusade more in the capricious spirit of youths on a holiday than as grim defenders of the cause of Southern rights that was so often trumpeted by their elders. Their sense of duty and their local loyalties kept these men at their posts long after any hope for an eventual victory had evaporated. But at the end, they lay down their arms and returned home, eager to establish families and resume normal lives.

Future research on the Cherokee County company might well focus upon what happened to the eighty-eight known survivors of the unit after the war and how their later fortunes reflected the larger history of the South in the postbellum period. In the meantime, and on the basis of admittedly incomplete evidence, I am tempted to speculate that the experience of the war did not disrupt the lives of the Lone Star Defenders

or affect their region nearly as much as has often been assumed. Though emancipation ended forever their slave-based economy, the introduction of the share-cropping system provided a means for the continued reliance upon black labor for cotton production. The brief experiment at racial equality during Reconstruction was thwarted by white resistance, intimidation of the freedmen, and the eventual abandonment of the effort by the Federal government.

In Cherokee County, veterans of Company C were in the forefront of the restoration of white supremacy by violence. Bitter in defeat, they vented their resentments against the blacks, who suddenly had been elevated from servitude to the status of citizens. Former Private Eugene W. Williams, for instance, celebrated the first anniversary of Lincoln's assassination with a toast to John Wilkes Booth:

Here is to the man that pulled the Trigger
That killed the man that freed the Nigger.⁴³

Veterans John Long, James Dillard, Sam Barron, John Reagan, and Lemuel Reed organized the first Cherokee County chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.⁴⁴ "The negroes [sic] have been giving some trouble," Long confided in a letter from the Autumn of 1865, "but by hanging & shooting one every once and a while, they have become more docile."⁴⁵ All five klansmen attained success in local or state politics. Long found his way to the United States Congress, and Dillard served in both the Texas House of Representatives and Senate. Barron won election to the offices of county clerk and county judge, Reagan fulfilled the duties of sheriff for almost twenty years, and Reed served as justice of the peace.⁴⁶

Did the consequences of defeat in 1865 impoverish the veterans of Company C, or did their economic status remain at about the same level as it had attained in the antebellum decade? At this point no definitive answer can be offered, though unquestionably a number of the Lone Star Defenders ended their lives in a state of abject penury. To be eligible for a Confederate veteran's pension under legislation passed in 1899, an applicant had to prove his indigency and disability.⁴⁷ At least fifteen of the veterans of Company C, or their widows, lived long enough and were poor enough to qualify for state aid under these provisions. Former Private Sam Keahey was only sixty-two when he obtained a pension in 1899, but already was palsied to the extent [that he was] scarcely able to feed himself.⁴⁸ Calvin Roark, whose father had owned seventeen slaves before the war, possessed "one horse valued at about \$10 — nothing else," when he applied for a pension in 1906.⁴⁹ Such men as these drew from \$79 to \$100 per year from the state pension fund. Most likely these instances of elderly poverty had more to do with the price of cotton and the perils of growing old in nineteenth-century America than with the consequences of the Civil War, however.

Finally, future researchers might inquire into the development of these

veterans' attitudes and value systems as the bitterness of war receded into the past. Did they become reconciled to the progressive ideal of the "New South," or did they entrench themselves in a vision of the bygone social order which they had fought to defend? The evidence available to me suggests that the veterans remained "unreconstructed" to the last, eager to vindicate the Old South and its role in the coming of the war. In an address delivered near the end of his life, John Long declared:

The North charged us with trying to destroy the Union. The very contrary is true ... That element of the North which stood for the destruction of slavery, stood for the destruction of everything material in the South ... We asked them to leave us alone ... But in consequence of [the] existence of slavery in the South and the Purpose of a certain element in the North to destroy it and impede our rapid progress, ... they declared for the freedom of the negro [sic] by confiscation ... They openly asserted through official expressions that they delighted to witness the destruction of the South's property and the 'starvation and want among our women and children.'⁵⁰

Thus did the last survivors of the Lone Star Defender's carry the arguments of 1860 deep into the twentieth century, still unresolved and unreconciled.

NOTES

¹Documents pertaining to Company C are included among the John Benjamin Long Papers, File 2E234, and the Demetria Ann Hill Collection, File 2E232, Barker Texas History Center, Austin.

²Samuel B. Barron, *The Lone Star Defenders: A Chronicle of the Third Texas Cavalry Regiment in the Civil War* [hereinafter cited as *LSD*] (New York, 1908; 1983 reprint ed.).

³U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* [hereinafter cited as *OR*] (128 vols., Washington, D.C., 1880-1901).

⁴U.S. National Archives and Record Service, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas* (Washington, D.C., 1960), Microcopy No. 323, Rolls 18-23.

⁵U.S. National Archives and Record Service, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* [hereinafter cited as *Population Schedules*] (Washington, D.C., 1967), Microcopy No. 653, Rolls 1287-1308.

⁶See Confederate Pension Records, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin, and Ogretta W. Huttash, comp., *Civil War Records of Cherokee County, Texas* (2 vols., Jacksonville, 1982).

⁷John A. Templeton, ed., *Cherokee County History* [hereinafter cited as *CCH*] (Jacksonville, 1986); Helen W. Crawford, comp., *Early Probates and Wills of Cherokee County, Texas* (Jacksonville, 1983); *Jacksonville: The Saga of a Dynamic Community* (Jacksonville, 1972).

⁸"Roll of Lone Star Defenders," File 611.1, Texas State Archives; *LSD*, pp. 17-18; Robert C. Cotner, *James Stephen Hogg: A Biography* (Austin, 1959), pp. 4-5, 10-19; Frank H. Smyrl, "Unionism in Texas, 1856-1861," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* [hereinafter cited as *SHQ*], LXVIII, (October, 1964), p. 193.

⁹Helen W. Crawford, comp., "Larissa College, Larissa, Texas — 1857-1860" (Typescript, Tyler Public Library, Tyler), pp. 5-8, 17-19, 29-31; T.L. Baker, *Ghost Towns of Texas* (Norman, Ok., 1986), pp. 81-82; Fred H. Ford and J.L. Brown, comps., *Larissa* (New

¹⁰Douglas J. Cater, *As It Was: The Story of Douglas John Cater's Life*, edited by William D. Cater (San Antonio, 1981), p. 86.

¹¹LSD, p. 19.

¹²Cotner, *Hogg*, pp. 3-4; LSD, pp. 17-23; Victor M. Rose, *Ross' Texas Brigade* [hereinafter cited as *RTB*] (Louisville, Ky., 1881, 1960 reprint ed.), pp. 16-18.

¹³John B. Long to Eliza Long, Dallas, June 22, 1861, John B. Long Papers.

¹⁴Data on ages, states of birth, counties of residence, occupations, wealth of households, and number of slaves are drawn from *Population Schedules*. Of the 114 soldiers on the original roll for Company C, 102 men, or eighty-nine percent, were identified on the schedules. See also Ralph A. and Robert Wooster, "'Rarin' for a Fight': Texans in the Confederate Army," *SHQ*, LXXXIV, (April, 1981), pp. 394-395.

¹⁵Per capita wealth per white inhabitant was calculated from data in *The Texas Almanac for 1862* (Galveston, 1862), p. 31, and U.S. Interior Department, Census Office, *Eighth Census, 1860: Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, D.C., 1864), pp. 484-486. See also U.S. Interior Department, Census Office, *Agriculture in the United States in 1860* (Washington, D.C., 1864), pp. 140-145; Randolph B. Campbell, *A Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850-1880* (Austin, 1983), p. 52; Cecil Harper, Jr., "Slavery Without Cotton: Hunt County, Texas, 1846-1864," *SHQ*, LXXXVIII, (April, 1985), p. 389; and Terry G. Jordan, "The Imprint of the Upper and Lower South on Mid-Nineteenth-Century Texas," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, LVII, (December, 1967), pp. 667-690.

¹⁶CCH, pp. 7-24.

¹⁷Ralph A. Wooster, "Wealthy Texans, 1860," *SHQ*, LXXI, (October, 1967), pp. 163-165; *Texas Almanac for 1862*, p. 31; Vera L. Dugas, "Texas Industry, 1860-1880," *SHQ*, LIX, (October, 1955), p. 155, fn. 8; Richard G. Lowe and Randolph B. Campbell, "Wealth-holding and Political Power in Antebellum Texas," *SHQ*, LXXIX, (July, 1975), p. 27.

¹⁸Property values per household are available for 101 officers and men of Company C.

¹⁹*Population of the United States in 1860*, pp. 472-473, 477, 479, 484. For the average value of slaves, see Campbell, *Southern Community in Crisis*, p. 64, and Otto H. Olsen, "Historians and the Extent of Slave Ownership in the Southern United States," *Civil War History*, XVIII, (June, 1972), p. 112, fn. 40.

²⁰Occupations were listed in the *Population Schedules* for ninety-seven officers and men on the original roll. The categories of agricultural wealth are derived from Campbell, *Southern Community in Crisis*, pp. 31-42. Gammage died in the service in April 1865, but not before his book, *The Camp, the Bivouac and the Battlefield* (Selma, Ala., 1864), appeared in print. On Brittain, see CCH, pp. 54, 184.

²¹CCH, pp. 30, 38, 54-55, 66, 77-82, 115, 363, 381, 410, 420-421, 479-480, 525-526, 552-553, 701.

²²W.T. Long to John B. Long, Rusk, July 2, 1861, John B. Long Papers.

²³OR, Ser. 1, Vol. III, pp. 118-120; Albert E. Castel, *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* (Baton Rouge, 1968), pp. 39-46.

²⁴LSD, pp. 42-49, 53-54, 150.

²⁵LSD, pp. 52-53, 57; Huttash, *Civil War Records*, II, p. 94; Crawford, "Larissa College," p. 17; CCH, pp. 38, 185, 445-446; William S. Spear and John H. Brown, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the New West* (Marshall, Tex., 1881), p. 265; Crawford, *Early Probates and Wills*, p. 25; "Co. C, 3rd Tex. Cav.," Demetria Ann Hill Collection.

²⁶LSD, pp. 59-62.

²⁷OR, Ser. 1, Vol. VIII, pp. 22-25; *RIB*, pp. 42-45; Dean Trickett, "The Civil War in Indian Territory," and Leroy H. Fischer and Kenny A. Franks, "Victory at Chusto-Talasa," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XVIII, (September, 1940), pp. 266-280, and XLIX, (Winter, 1971-72), pp. 452-475.

²⁸OR, Ser. 1, Vol. VIII, pp. 293-294; LSD, pp. 63-76; Robert G. Hartje, *Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General* (Nashville, 1967), pp. 122-127.

²⁹LSD, pp. 79-95; T. Harry Williams, *P.G.T. Beauregard, Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge, 1955), pp. 151-155.

³⁰OR, Ser. 1, Vol. X, Pt. 2, pp. 583-584.

³¹LSD, p. 101; CCH, p. 119; Huttash, *Civil War Records*, II, p. 41; Lowell H. Harrison, "Conscription and the Confederacy," *Civil War Times Illustrated* [hereinafter cited as CWTI], IX, (July, 1970), pp. 10-19.

³²OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XVII, Pt. 1, pp. 119-124, 376-382, 385-389; LSD, pp. 104-126; Glenn W. Sunderland, "The Battle of Corinth," and Albert E. Castel, "Battle Without a Victor ... Iuka," CWTI, VI, (April, 1967), pp. 28-37, and XI, (October, 1972), pp. 12-18.

³³OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XVII, Pt. 1, p. 503; LSD, pp. 131-142; RTB, pp. 84-92; Hartje, *Van Dorn*, pp. 254-267; Bruce F. Dinges, "Running Down Rebels," CWTI, XIX, (April, 1980), pp. 10-18.

³⁴OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XXIII, Pt. 1, pp. 116-118, 123-124; LSD, pp. 144-151; RTB, pp. 92-94; Hartje, *Van Dorn*, pp. 275-294.

³⁵OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 956, 989, 1016; LSD, pp. 161-168; RTB, pp. 108-110.

³⁶OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XXXI, Pt. 3, pp. 879-880, and Vol. XXXII, Pt. 1, pp. 385-391, Pt. 2, p. 823; LSD, pp. 173-189; Judith A. Benner, *Sul Ross: Soldier, Statesman, Educator* (College Station, 1983), pp. 96-102; Edwin C. Bearss, "Misfire in Mississippi: McPherson's Canton Expedition," *Civil War History*, VIII, (Dec., 1962), pp. 401-416; Ed. M. Main, *The Story of the Marches, Battles and Incidents of the Third United States Colored Cavalry* (New York, 1970), pp. 93-122.

³⁷Richard E. Beringer, et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, Ga., 1986), pp. 479-481.

³⁸OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XXXVIII, Pt. 3, pp. 962-965, Pt. 5, pp. 995-996; LSD, pp. 190-236; Wilbur S. Nye, "Cavalry Operations Around Atlanta," John W. Rowell, "McCook's Raid," and Richard H. McMurtry, "'The Hell Hole': New Hope Church," CWTI, III, (July, 1964), pp. 46-50, XI, (February, 1973), pp. 32-43, and XIII, (July, 1974), pp. 4-6, 8-9, 42-48.

³⁹OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XLV, Pt. 1, pp. 767-773; LSD, pp. 251-253, 275-276; Robert S. Henry, "First With the Most" *Forrest* (Indianapolis, 1944), pp. 385-415; Thomas A. Wigginton, "Cavalry Operations in the Nashville Campaign," CWTI, III, (December, 1964), pp. 40-43.

⁴⁰Major General George H. Thomas, as quoted in OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XLV, Pt. 1, p. 42.

⁴¹LSD, pp. 267-275; Beringer, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, p. 480.

⁴²Beringer, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, p. 478; Harold B. Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade: A Compendium* (Hillsboro, Tex., 1977), pp. 533-538.

⁴³E.W. Williams to John B. Long, Pickens Station, Miss., April 16, 1866, John B. Long Papers.

⁴⁴Sue E. Moore, "The Life of John Benjamin Long," (Unpublished master of arts thesis, University of Texas, 1924), pp. 52-55.

⁴⁵J.B. Long to Nellie and Aunt Nin, Rusk, Oct. 10, 1865, John B. Long Papers.

⁴⁶CCH, pp. 83-91, 97-98, 185, 381-382, 701; Tommy Yett, comp., *Members of the Legislature of the State of Texas from 1846 to 1939* (Austin, 1939), pp. 57, 69, 78, 135, 247; *Confederate Veteran*, XVII, (November, 1909), p. 569; and XX, (June, 1912), p. 284.

⁴⁷Pensions were restricted to veterans who owned a homestead or personal property worth no more than \$1000 and had an annual income of less than \$300. See Phillip D. Lissner, "Confederate Pensioners of Texas," and Perry M. De Leon, "What the South is Doing For Her Veterans," and "How the South Cares for Its Veterans," *Confederate Veteran*, XXIII, (June, July, 1915), pp. 255, 333, and XXIX, (September, 1921), pp. 366-367.

⁴⁸Confederate Pension Application No. 4189, Texas State Archives.

⁴⁹Huttash, *Civil War Records*, II, p. 77.